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623 clearly seen that those not represented at the conference were the real insti-
628 gators of the war and that their actions were without tribal sanction.

[202] One old man then suggested sending a messenger with a message stick to the bushmen, who were not represented, to tell them that there would be a great makarata or peace-making ceremony (pages 174-176). Someone replied that this was foolishness for makaratas had been tried and they had failed because the enemies violated the rules. Instead of bringing peace the makaratas had only brought more trouble and greater conflict. Discussion of this point finally brought victory to the one who opposed the makaratas because the antagonism of the coastal people against the inland clans was still very strong and they wanted vengeance as well as peace.

What, then, could be done to stop the fighting? The situation was desperate; drastic efforts must be made. One of the older men said, "Let us stop all war. This killing of our young men is no good. It is better that we have ceremonies all the time and never have war. Let us have a gaingar."

Everyone agreed he was right. The speaker continued, "We will have a spear fight to end all spear fights."

A gaingar is the most deadly form of Murngin warfare. Later I learned that 17 men had been killed in one gaingar. In proportion to the population this meant a higher mortality rate than in all of the battles of World War I. This old man was proposing that today's young men be sacrificed so that the young men of tomorrow could be saved.

I was asked what I thought of the idea. I did not respond for it was too much. I sat there, among a council of the wisest men of a Stone Age culture. In one sense several millenniums separated their civilization from mine. Yet I had been a soldier in a war in which our leaders and those of our allies had said, "This is a war to end all wars," and had sent millions of young men to die with this rallying cry.

The discussion continued. Most of the group were enthusiastically in favor of the gaingar. The minority, Mahkarolla among them, grudgingly agreed.

When the meeting disbanded Mahkarolla and I walked back to my camp. "When I was a boy I saw a spear fight to end all spear fights," he said. "Many men were killed. It was no good. We must not have it. My people did not stop fighting. As you see, we are fighting today just as we did before. Spear fights do not end spear fights."

159 One day Mahkarolla and I started on an expedition with two canoeloads
502 of Murngin men, I to map clan territories, he to visit the sacred pools where
E121 his totems lived. As we sailed in the dugout around the rocky cliffs of
184 Point Napier, across the channel from the English Company Islands, we
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entered almost open sea where the wind sweeps down from the northeast and Cape Wessel with terrific force. The western side of Napier's Peninsula was quiet and calm, but the moment we rounded the point we entered a heavy, stormy sea. To go back would have risked being dashed to pieces against the rocky cliffs of the point; we had to go on—across many miles of open sea.

Mahkarolla was in my canoe. Each canoe was equipped with a small sail and a paddle used as a rudder. Along the sides the men used paddles to steady the canoe and keep it from tipping over. The dugout canoes with no outriggers that are constructed by the natives of North Australia are unwieldy and easily upset even in calm water.

As the storm increased Mahkarolla became anxious and asked his older brother, Charli Charli Sit-Down, to act as steersman. In spite of his broken back he was probably the best canoeman in North Australia. He was entirely dependent upon the water for long distance traveling and had become an excellent sailor. Mahkarolla distributed the other men about the boat and took charge of the sail. He placed me in the center in front of Charli Charli.

I thought the waves would submerge us or dash up against the rocks, but the little canoe rose slowly over them and plunged into the troughs beyond. Sometimes the waves were so high that we could not see the sail of the other canoe. Finally, I suggested to Charli Charli that we go back. He shook his head and pointed to the rocks, indicating with a gesture that we would be swamped and killed.

The wind and waves were increasing. One man bailed furiously with a bivalve shell, for although the waves did not strike us the heavy spray filled our canoe. The natives mumbled to themselves. They were calling on their totem ancestors and their totems to help them. I said nothing and looked straight ahead. Then I started to swear in native at the storm. Charli Charli tapped me on the shoulder and asked me to stop because I would offend the Great Serpent and he might swallow us.

In gripping the gunwales I had one hand underwater. Charli Charli again tapped my shoulder and shook his head. He pointed to my hand and said, "Bult-main-dji" (gray shark). I pulled my hand out of the water and turned it so that the fingers were inside the boat. The day before our canoe had been struck several times by large sharks which had come to prey on a crocodile we had harpooned.

We sailed on. We had lost sight of the other canoe and wondered whether it had sunk or gone back. The wind increased and the waves rose higher and higher. We took down the sail because it was no longer possible to control it. It seemed only a matter of minutes before one of the waves would strike us and sink us all.

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SUN AND MORNING STAR

Late in the year women gather the corms, and at sunset they can see Jurrpan in the western sky shining down on his ripening swamp-children.

The Milky Way Galaxy is a wide river and was made by the creative Ancestresses before they came to the earth. Strong winds blow over it and whip up white-crested waves, thereby accounting for its peculiar diffused light. Two brothers once came to this Barduru River and planned to cross it. Wawa, the elder brother, said: 'We will need a strong canoe to carry us. Let us go back into the bush till we find a tree with a good sheet of bark.' Yuku Yuku, the younger brother, offered to cut the paddles; he felled a soft-wood tree and made them like those now used by nomads, except that they were extremely thin and pliable. Nevertheless they were effective and the canoe travelled rapidly.

By the time the brothers were half-way across the river the sun set and a wind swept down from the hills and lashed the waves till they filled the canoe. Jumping overboard, after the manner of modern Yulendor, the men tried to empty their canoe by rocking it from side to side, but wind and waves in the darkness compelled them to abandon it, and they struck out for the shore.

Yuku Yuku was wearing several tightly woven string armbands, and it is easy to imagine the inconvenience they caused him once they became wet and began to shrink. After a time he fell behind his brother, and as his arms stiffened, he gasped: 'I cannot keep afloat any longer.'

'Throw your armbands away.'

'I have tried, but they are too tight.'

And he sank.

Wawa did not hear the last remark, but when he looked back and failed to see his brother he returned to search for him. He swam about and called for a long time, yet not till he felt his own strength ebbing did he abandon the

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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search and make for the shore. Within a few yards of it he also collapsed and sank.

Two days after the heavenly brothers sank in the Milky Way, another member of their horde found their tracks on the river bank and saw the place where they had made a canoe. On the beach he found a paddle and, when the remains of a canoe floated toward him, he had no difficulty in reconstructing the tragedy. A day later his worst fears were confirmed when Wawa's body was washed ashore. The hunter returned to his horde with the doleful news, and that night everyone sang, wailed and performed the purification ceremony to drive off the ghosts of the dead men. But when they went to sleep, Wawa's and Yuku Yuku's ghosts stole into the camp and spoke to the sleeping horde, so that they imagined they were dreaming: 'We have had a lot of trouble. Our canoe sank and we were drowned.' Wawa then took up the tale and told the horde that whenever they looked into the night sky they would see the great Barduru River: 'You will see our dark heads in the river. Yuku Yuku is near a bright star in the middle of it, and my spirit dwells near the shore where I sank.'

Such tragedies are not infrequent in aboriginal life. Canoes without exception leak badly but nomads risk their lives in any sort of dug-out so long as paper-bark can be rammed into the cracks with a thumbnail. During the time I was in the north at least one canoe fatality occurred every two years, and canoes frequently foundered in the waves. The most recent of these events occurred when seven or eight men and boys left for an island a few miles off-shore; a wind rose at nightfall and no trace has since been found of the men or their canoe.

Two brothers from Yirrkala were turtle-hunting in an old, cracked and waterlogged canoe, which sank under them. They were then three miles off-shore and tried to swim to a barren sandy island two miles away, but one man was a

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cripple and soon weakened. He told his brother that he could not go any farther, and calmly preparing to go down he gave away his one and only valuable possession: 'When you get ashore, you can have my tomahawk,' he said. With the usual aboriginal courage, loyalty, and determination, the older man returned to his brother, and by keeping him afloat, and making use of tide and waves, they were washed ashore in an exhausted state on the sandy island, where they remained three days without water or shade. At the end of that time they made a smoke-fire from a wood-drill and drift-wood, and they were rescued by friends from the mainland, who came to see why the brothers were camping on the island.

We were walking along one of the open-sea beaches when an old man told me the tale of the nautilus shell. He said in effect: 'We call it a moon-shell.' I asked what it had to do with the moon, and was told that the old moon dies once a month and throws this, his skeleton, into the sea. The moon dies, and after the lapse of a few days his spirit is reincarnated and appears as a new moon. I began to understand then why a nomad on seeing a new moon joyfully shouts the news to the camp. Men, women, and children rejoice together as over the return of a long-absent friend.

A long time ago a man camped beside a lagoon in the mountains. Life had dealt kindly with him, but in spite of his pleasant surroundings and good food supply he wanted to live in the sky. At night the Evening Star tantalizingly twinkled in the rippling lagoon, till the man could stand it no longer, so he climbed into the sky. His plan had been carefully thought out: 'I will live with the stars and outshine them till I am an old man, and when I die I will put my spirit in a new body.'

'Ngalindi' goes through this cycle every lunar month, and